

# RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH 1. 18.

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## A SERIOUS EXHORTATION TO ALL, WHO CALL THEMSELVES UNIVERSALISTS.

*'I beseech you brethren suffer the word of exhortation.'*—Paul

Beloved brethren, in some measure sensible of the laudable and persevering exertions of many of my worthy fellow servants, in the ministry of reconciliation, who have labored to enlighten our understandings into the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to impress on our minds correct views of the divine theory and system of the gospel, and also to remove the clouds of darkness, which have hung over our minds and obscured the light of truth from shining clearly into them, &c. I have been induced to cast in my mite, at this time, by calling your serious attention to those important considerations, so plainly deducible from the principles of that doctrine in which you have been instructed.

This doctrine like the stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands, increases with astonishing and almost inconceivable rapidity, melting down opposition, as the sun does ice, in the meridian of a summer's day; whilst darkness flees apace before the brightness of its rising. But with all this prosperity and good success, let us take heed lest we fall, and be careful that with all our faith, profession and performances, we become not as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

Is it my brethren, an improper question to ask, if, after all our instructions into the doctrine which we profess, and all our understanding of its divine theory, we have not too much neglected the practical part of our profession? Whether it be thought by any to be improper or not, I honestly answer for one it is not; but a question which ought to come home to my heart. Do any of you ask what my aim is, in addressing you in this manner? I answer, it is to stir up your minds, by way of remembrance, and induce you to walk worthy the vocation wherewith ye are called; that all who name the name of Christ, may be careful to depart from iniquity and maintain good works, by living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. To excite in you a love of virtue, that you may not only know how to do right, but practice it; not only know that the way of the transgressor is hard, but forsake it and choose the pleasant ways and peaceful paths of wisdom,—of that wisdom, which cometh down from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, that by 'giving all diligence, you may add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, which is the bond of perfectness.' This is what I aim at. And would to God, I could be successful in attempting to do it.

Need I remind you of the great profession which we have made, with which no others can be compared. We profess to believe that the Almighty Father of all our spirits is love,—is infinite in goodness, wisdom, and in power; that all mankind are brethren of the same family, on whom he smiles impartially, as heirs mutually of his benevolence,

bound, finally, to the same happy world of immortal felicity. To this God we profess to look up as our unchangeable Friend and Benefactor, in whom we live and have our being. All this, certainly, constitutes him a lovely and adorable Being, whom we can with propriety love with all our hearts. Do we thus love him? if so, let us keep his commandments, of which this is the first, and the second is like unto it; 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' and this let us evince, by doing unto others, as we would, that others should do unto us. This last commandment is plainly taught to us, by the principles before laid down; for how can we believe and feel, that all men are our brethren, all equally loved and blessed by God, with the same hopes and the same prospects; and still hate one of them? We cannot. For if we say that we love God and hate our brethren, we are liars and the truth is not in us. Now love worketh no ill to its neighbor, it blesseth and curseth not. 'And hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.'

Now let us remember that God has never required any thing of us, but what is calculated to produce, in obedience, our highest good; and that we are so constituted, that it is just as much impossible for us to be happy in disobedience, as it is to enjoy the light and heat of the sun in the night, or be satisfied without food, or to find peace and rest, while travelling on pointed thorns. Thus as we love God, and would promote his highest glory, and our own greatest happiness; let the principles of the doctrine we profess, have their full influence on our minds, our thoughts, disposition and actions. This doctrine should influence our minds in our retired hours of meditation, in the domestic circle at home, in the house of worship, in our daily labors, in our dealings with our fellow men, in our conversation, in short, in all our concerns in life. This will cleanse our thoughts and motives from impurity, lead us to humility of heart, teach us to repose our confidence and dependence upon God, to love and adore him with all our hearts, as the greatest and best of all Beings, the giver of life, of every good and perfect gift, and this view of his goodness will lead us to repentance; these principles, if adhered to, will bring harmony and peace to our souls into the family circle, inspire some devotion at the place of worship, cheer us in our daily labors, lead us to deal honestly and justly with our brethren, purify our conversation from vain idle profane words, render us grateful in health and prosperity, patient and reconciled under losses, sickness, and adversity; it will make us truly happy through all the chequered scenes of life, and live in the enjoyments of heaven whilst we are yet on earth; it will make us as a body or church, to shine like a light on a stand, and appear like a city set on a hill, yea like Jerusalem on the hill of Zion,—yes my dear brethren, this will insure our triumphant success in all that can render us blessed and happy, and this alone:—'and now if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things;' and thus may our heavenly Father, conduct us through the journey of life, in righteousness, joy, and peace, till, at last we slumber in death, and are carried to the silent and undisturbed closet of the grave, there to repose, till he shall by the sound of the trumpet make us in the image of Christ, and call us to enjoy that immortal felicity promised in the gospel.—Amen.

A. B\*\*\*\*\*.

*From the (Boston) Universalist Magazine.*

To the Editors of the Magazine.

As the following sentiments on the oneness of God's justice and mercy are in harmony with the scriptures, and consequently with the doctrine of Universal Benevolence, I send them to you for insertion.

HERMES.

### JUSTICE OF GOD NOT OPPOSED TO HIS MERCY.

There is not perhaps, in the whole range of school divinity, a more fruitful source of error, than the opinion, so generally entertained, of the opposing and contradictory qualities, influences, and acquisitions of God's justice and mercy. To read the common *schemes*, as they are called, of theologians, one would imagine, that the divine mind was never at peace, that a perpetual conflict was kept up between its lenient inclinations, and the stern demands of what might not irreverently be termed a sense of duty, were it not more like the unbending fate, which was thought by the ancients to govern the determinations of their superior divinity; for though not stated to be so, it certainly gives the impression of an external and independent power, which interposes itself to forbid the intentions of love.

This idea is not confined to written systems, and voluminous bodies of divinity; would that it were, for then its injurious effects might not be so extensive; but your children are taught to repeat it in their catechisms, yourselves repeat it in your church creeds, it is forced into the prayers of your clergymen, and they insist and dilate upon it in their lectures and sermons, over and over again. On the great subject of the mission, sufferings, and death of the Saviour, you are constantly told, that God saw the sinful and wretched condition of men, that he pitied, and wished to save them; but they had sinned, rebelled, and fallen; they had committed an infinite offence against an infinite Deity, and a frowning, unrelenting justice interposes, and calls for an infinite satisfaction, the sacrifice of his only Son.—Mercy is obliged to yield. Justice obtains its demand; while, in the language of a bargain, the sacrifice is called an *equivalent*, and the whole transaction is termed a *merciful plan*, a *dispensation of love*! No wonder that there are so many infidels, when this is represented as christianity.

Without entering upon an examination of the several errors of this system, a few remarks will be offered on that, which may be considered as the fundamental and prevailing one, namely, the supposition of a disagreement between the attributes of God; the idea that his rigorous justice intercepts the benevolent designs of his mercy.

Is not this opinion, in the first place, degrading to the true character of Supreme Perfection? Does it not leave a blank in the description of Deity, which even our finite conceptions may fill? Is it consistent with *unity* of his character, thus to present one of its principles in direct opposition to another? Is it consistent with the *loveliness* of his character, thus to present its severity overcoming its benevolence? Or is it consistent with the dignity of his character thus to present its benevolence yielding to its severity? With such conceptions of God, can we feel satisfied, can we feel secure? Let any unprejudiced and thinking man ask himself these questions separately and seriously.

Is not this opinion, in the second place, at variance, not only with proper apprehensions of the whole divine character, but with a proper definition of the divine justice and mercy, singly considered? What is the justice of God, and what is his mercy? Does his justice demand inflictions, from which his mercy recoils? We think not. Does his mercy ask for indulgences, which his justice refuses to grant? We think not.—When justice is unfeeling and regards not, as its sole and ultimate end, the happiness of its objects, it certainly is not just; it ceases to be justice, and takes the aspect and character of cruelty. And when mercy is short-sighted and partial, acting from impulse,

rather than from a sense of right, and relieving present misery, rather than consulting for real and lasting good, it is no longer mercy, has degenerated into weakness. Who will ascribe either of these dispositions to God? Who will say that his justice is but wrath, and his mercy but unguided feeling? And yet this is virtually said by those, who hold the opinions against which we are contending; it is virtually said by the common error which we have stated; it is virtually said by those systems, which make our redemption the result of opposing principles and counsels, and the performance of a previous stipulation. There is no getting away from these inferences. In the common systems of divinity, the justice and mercy of God are plainly represented as distinct and opposed. Now those qualities, in their perfection, never can be either distinct or opposed; for perfect justice will always have pity on weakness and frailty, and perfect mercy will always unfalteringly pursue the straight and only course, which leads to the best possible consequences.

The idea, therefore, of an opposition between the justice and the mercy of God, arises from a gross misapprehension of those attributes themselves, and is unworthy of the divine character. If these propositions are established, it follows, in the third place, that it will produce injurious effects on our minds. Religion is so important a subject, that religious men must be hurtful in some way or other, and in a greater or less degree. God is the object and end of all religion, and so far as a particular system of religion inculcates wrong conceptions of God, it must be a false one, and false in its foundation. God is the Supreme Disposer; he governs our lives according to his will, and keeps in his own hands the entire regulation of our future destiny. We are weak and powerless; we cannot stand before him; we know that we cannot; unforeseen and uncontrollable events defeat our intentions and defy our calculations; and death comes, we know not how or when, to close the present scene. It must affect us nearly then, to know what is the character of this Being; and according to the conclusions which we form, will be in a great measure the complexion of our religious opinions, and the tone of our religious language.

If then, we regard him as a monarch, whose resolutions are taken without reference to the nature and circumstances of those whom he governs, and whose inflections are determined by a principle, which, however severe it may be, he is compelled to follow, we must of course regard him with feelings, which, in a great part, will be those of apprehension and dread, with feelings which ought not to be connected, no, not at all, with the only Wise and Good, with feelings which are calculated to repress the confidence and grateful love, with which we should seek our Father, and which should not be suffered to mingle with the adoration of the heart. And this is the fact. And this is the explanation of many of the superstitious notions and observances, which reflect any thing but honor on the religion of Christ. The Saviour has been prayed to, the Virgin Mary has been prayed to, and hundreds of saints have been prayed to, in preference, yes, we scruple not to say, in preference to the great and only true object of worship; because a servile and unworthy fear was entertained of that object, and other beings and names were resorted to, in order to propitiate and favorably incline the Holy One, who is always more ready to hear, than we are to pray, and always more willing to forgive us our sins, than we are to forsake them. What is the language of nine out of ten of the hymns which are addressed to Christ, and sang in Christian Churches? Plainly this; that Christ is a merciful, benignant and compassionate being, who interposed between the anger of God and the destruction of men, and offered himself as a sacrifice to the inexorable vengeance, which neither could nor would accept of any other. Is this reason, is this religion, is this christianity, is this in accordance with the language of him, who said, 'Why call ye thou me good, there is none good but one, that is God?'

Now what can be the origin of so monstrous an error?



We conceive it to be occasioned by referring the character and counsels of God to the very imperfect standard of our own actions and feelings. By this we mean, that instead of raising their own ideas to some understanding or perfection, men have brought down perfection to the level of their own ideas, or in other words have substituted imperfection in its place. They have considered, not so much the true and abstract nature of justice and mercy, as the justice and mercy which live upon earth, are conformed to their earthly residence, and modified by the passions, the weakness, the false judgment, the short sightedness of man. It is true, that we must form our conceptions of the personal attributes of God, from corresponding qualities among ourselves; but then we must not confine them here, but remember that they are to be invested with omniscience and infinity; in short, united to one another, and united to God.

To illustrate by an example. Brutus pronounced judgment against his own sons, because the good of the commonwealth, as he thought, required that they should die. This act has been praised by some as *just*, and condemned by others as *unmerciful*. One will think that he displayed his heroism in sacrificing the feelings of a father to the existence of a state; and another, that the voice of nature should never have been so cruelly stifled at the call of a heartless theory, or the prospect of an uncertain good. But the fact is, we are not competent to decide at all on the case, because we can neither balance motives or consequences. Neither was Brutus capable of deciding whether he acted right or wrong, because he could not foresee effects, nor determine whether the father or the magistrate ought to have prevailed in the decision. He only acted according to the best of his judgment; and that is all which any man can do in a question of opposing feelings, interests and considerations. But here is the error, men have supposed the Deity to be placed in a certain situation; and then have undertaken to say how he must have been influenced, and how he ought to have determined, and actually did determine, under the existing circumstances. They have undertaken to say, from their own notions of what would have been felt and done on earth, what in reality was felt and done in heaven; without reflecting that they were applying this rule to a Being, who is impassible and omniscient, and who could not, therefore, entertain any inclination in opposition to any principles, or be guided by any circumstances, of which he did not clearly see all the bearings, relations, and results.

We shall conclude this essay by giving such a view of the justice and mercy of God, as will form a summary of what has been offered on this subject. To speak strictly, we should say, that justice and mercy were not separate qualities of the divine Mind, but that, although we used the names separately, for the sake of convenience and accommodation, they were, in fact, the same. The ways of God are *right*, and this expresses all that we mean, when we say that they are just and merciful. In the counsels of God, there can be no wavering, nor even deliberation; the course that alone is proper, the course that alone conduces to the best possible ends, in every possible connexion, and throughout all eternity, that course is alone pursued, and it is pursued exactly when its operation is called for by infinite wisdom. This course is just, at the same time that it is merciful, and merciful, because it is perfectly just. It never deviates on account of motives, which we should call compassionate, because should it ever deviate in the least, it would cease to be both just and merciful. It never can be swayed by sentiments of anger or revenge, because, as it consults the good of the whole, and the good of each individual, it must terminate in the happiness of all. Let us henceforth have more enlarged and exalted conceptions of that Almighty Being, who is both Wisdom and Love, whose justice cannot be unmerciful, and whose mercy cannot be unjust; whose justice and mercy are one.—*Unitarian Miscellany*.

REMARKS.—It is clearly evident from the foregoing

considerations, as well as from all reasonings on the subject, that if justice and mercy are unlike, they must oppose each other according to the degree of difference; and if God is sometimes just and sometimes merciful in his dealings with the children of men, he cannot pursue a uniform course of government. But if he is of one mind, into which enters no shadow of change, he must be either merciful or just from eternity to eternity, or justice and mercy are as homogeneous as the prismatic colors in a sunbeam. The stability of God's throne depends on the oneness of his justice & mercy; for if they differ, and God is actuated by both principles, his counsels are fluctuating, the sceptre trembles in his hand.—Though some have triumphantly asserted from the days of Young to the present, that a God all mercy is a God unjust, the fallacy of the statement and the groundlessness of their exultation are evinced by this clear reasoning, if the proposition be granted, God is merciful in the same degree that he is just, and just in the same degree that he is merciful. If, as the prevalent error says in fact, God is cruel when just, and weak and indulgent when merciful, there is no necessity of persuading men to imitate their Father in heaven, for they have a sufficiency of unyielding severity and misguided compassion already.—When strong reasons from scripture, creation, providence, and experience are urged in favor of unlimited salvation, we are frequently reminded that God is a God of justice as well as mercy, and that he cannot suffer his holy law to be violated with impunity, and consequently our hopes of heaven, deduced from these considerations, are deceitful. But if it is a truth, that God is actuated by two eternally opposing principles, we might reply, that he could not permit the sound demands of his mercy to be forever disregarded, but would show that he as highly valued commiseration as vengeance, and that therefore our security in the book of ages was not lessened by this objection. If a time is coming, as people frequently assure us, when God shall ascend his throne of justice, or, in other words, shall become just, all have abundant reason to fear; for they will be under a new government, and in truth the subjects of a God entirely different from him who has ruled this world, so that what has been experienced here will furnish no pledge for the future. Let each then rejoice that God is just in the same degree that he is merciful, and merciful in the same degree that he is just.

HERMES.

From the Philadelphia Gazetteer, of Jan. 14.

#### ON TIME.

Where is yesterday? It is gone forever! Where is to-day? Its moments are on the wing! Where is to-morrow?

"In another world!

To numbers this is certain; the reverse

Is sure to none!

Young.

On what then are our hopes built? on time or eternity? on earth or heaven? Is the creature or the creator our chief good? The uncertain stream or the boundless ocean, our source of supply? These are momentous inquiries. May we lay them to heart! May reflection feed upon them! May grace improve them!

Of what infinite value is time! It is the space given for repentance, or to fill up the measure of our iniquities; it is the prelude, the forerunner of heaven or hell; and yet, how short, how uncertain is duration!

"Slow like the dial's tardy moving shade,  
Day after day slides from us unperceiv'd.  
The cunning fugitive is swift by stealth;  
Too subtle is the movement to be seen;  
Yet soon the hour is up and we are gone!"

Young.

How small a part of time elapsed has been given to our God! how much to vanity and folly! The world has

claimed its portion, and we have acceded to its demand. Business has required its allotment, and we have granted its request.—Our wearied bodies have asked for their share; and hours have been allotted to sleep which might have been more profitably employed in praise and prayer. Sinful diversions, in our unconverted state, have stolen from us, day after day; and midnight has not ended our thoughtless revels.—These, and nameless other objects, have, at one period or other, engrossed our attention, our affection, our esteem, but how small a portion have we reserved for reflection, for prayer, for soul concerns!—Well may we adore the clemency of God, and with the prophet exclaim, “It is of the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed; and because his compassions fail not: blessed be his holy name, they are new every morning! But what are our thoughts, our views, our dispositions? Have we profited by experience; and can we say, the time past of our life has sufficed us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles; to have served divers lusts and passions! Are we now obeying from the heart, the Divine injunction, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate; and touch not the unclean thing?” Are our thoughts, our desires, our pursuits, such as become those who are called to glory and virtue; such as are suited to the dignity of the followers of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom? Can we throw down the gauntlet, like our Divine Saviour, and say, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” Alas, we cannot; our experience tells us that in many things, we offend; that in all we come short of that glory, in which it is our privilege, and should be our ambition, at all times to shine. How circumscribed are our views of God, of his word, and of ourselves! How much dross is still mixed with the fine gold of the kingdom! How often does a deceitful heart betray itself, and tell us we have not yet attained, neither are already perfect!

What reflections should these convictions produce? May they not briefly be these:—A new period of time is begun; another year (perhaps my last) is commenced. Lord let me be devoted to thee! let our hearts, our lives, our all be thine! We desire to love thee! Make us ashamed that we are still so cold; make us glow with divine ardour; calm us as the purchase of thy blood, as the conquest of thy love, and henceforth

“Be thou our all,  
Our theme, our inspiration, and our crown,  
Our strength in age, our rise in low estate:  
Our soul’s ambition, pleasure, wealth; our world,  
Our light in darkness, and our life in death.

The following remarks on the above article, appeared in the *Gazetteer* of Jan. 24.

*To the Editor of the Gazetteer.*

*Respected Sir,*—The article headed “Time,” must certainly have been admitted through mistake, for, though many of its sentiments are unobjectionable, yet, as a whole, it implies the truth of a doctrine which, you must be aware is entirely destitute of any rational or scriptural support; I allude to the doctrine, that our present existence is a probationary state, during which we have it in our power so to improve our talents, as thereby to gain admittance, after death into a state of immortal happiness in heaven, or, by neglecting the opportunities thus afforded us, to seal our condemnation to eternal misery. Though I am fully assured that you have no faith in the above sentiment, yet, as the article referred to has unfortunately appeared in your columns, and as it is an idea daily proclaimed from the pulpits of the *orthodox* as essential to the Christian faith, I think it may not be improper, or uninteresting to your readers, to occupy a few moments in considering the tendency of the doctrine, and in testing its truth by the only sure criterion, the page of Revelation.

Admitting the above doctrine to be true, or necessarily acknowledges the truth of the following propositions, viz.

1st. That man’s final salvation is dependant upon the

works of the creature, or, in other words, that man is capable of affecting his own Salvation.

2d. That God’s mercy is a passive, and not an affective principle, and is capable of being successfully opposed by the finite powers of man, or, that the mercy of our heavenly Father is not permanent, but, in relation to the majority of his creatures, is circumscribed by the limits of their fleeting lives. And,

3d. That the eternal character, and consequently the condition of man, is indelibly stamped upon him at the hour of death, and that as death leaves him, so eternity shall find him.

That the above propositions are as necessarily involved in the doctrine of a probationary state referred to above, as they are totally opposed to the testimony of the scriptures, it will be our business next to demonstrate.

1st. If it be required of man to perform on his part any act as necessary to ensure his admission into that state of immortal glory, consequent upon the resurrection, whether that act be believing, repenting, fulfilling the requirements of the moral law, provided he possess the power to perform or neglect the act as he may think proper, let the act be great or small, the simple assent of the understanding or an entire change of his nature, the repentance of an hour, or a continued life of virtue, Salvation so far as it relates to the creature is entirely dependant and consequent upon that act; and therefore, according to this supposition, the sovereign grace of Almighty God cannot save a single individual, without that individual, as blind, ignorant and fallible as he may possibly be, consent to co-operate with his maker, and finish the work which God has begun. Now, such a doctrine is as directly opposed to the testimony of the inspired penman, as light is to darkness, for, turn to the Record, and we are there told, in terms which can neither be misunderstood or disputed, that our eternal state is the pure effect of divine grace, and independent of any the slightest act performed by man; (see Rom. iv. 4—xi. 6—Eph. ii. v.—Tit. ii. 11.) Man can do nothing by which he can make God, in any degree, his debtor, or obtain the slightest claim to immortality; but, if the eternal state of mankind depended upon conditions, the moment those conditions are performed on the part of any individual, Salvation, is, to him, no longer a favour freely conferred, but according to every principle of strict justice a debt due to, and to be demanded by him.

From what has been here argued, let it not be supposed that we believe true repentance, perfect confidence or faith, and complete moral rectitude, unnecessary to man’s happiness, or, that man can enter heaven without them: so far from this, we believe that in them, and in them alone, man’s real happiness consists—and, hence, instead of their being requisites which must *previously* exist in man, to enable him to enter upon the joys of heaven, the moment they are conferred upon him by the operation of the grace and power of God, man is in heaven; whether this be done in time or in eternity, the only difference is, that while on earth, man is mortal and consequently fallible, and hence his life is a continued state of warfare between right and wrong, temptation and virtuous resolution—but in eternity, being raised to immortality and consequently freed from corruption, he is no longer capable of sin—the principles, however, from which his happiness flows are the same, viz. as a consequence of in-dwelling love and purity; and this state of heart is not the work of man, but the operation of divine grace through Christ Jesus.

The opposing principles of Heaven and Hell have no necessary relation to time or eternity, but to the constitution of man, and the feelings of his soul. For the declaration of Christ is, “The kingdom of God is within you,” Luke xvi. 21—and “now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation,” 2 Cor. vi. 2.

The gate of Heaven stands always open, and it is not necessary to wait for death to close our eyes before we can



enter!—Let us “put on Christ,” that is, follow his example by cultivating the principles of universal love, resting “in full faith, hope and confidence,” that he, through the power of God, will awake us from the sleep of death in his own likeness: and we are assured that even in this world, our hearts shall become “the temple of the living God.” (2 Cor. vi. 16—1 John iv. 13)—and where God dwells surely there is heaven!—so also, on the other hand, condemnation in consequence of sins lingereth not. “For he that believeth not is condemned already,” John iii. 18. Hence, the very idea of the acts “of time” being the “prelude or forerunner” of a “heaven or hell” in eternity, is entirely fallacious—what relates to time, finishes with time; for in the fulness of times, in the morning of eternity, God, we are assured, will “make all things new.”

TO BE CONTINUED.

*From the (Portland) Christian Intelligencer.*

## THE CHRISTIAN OPITULATOR.....No. XI.

### WHAT IS THE TRUE SIGNIFICATION OF THE WORD HELL?

In our last, having finished the examination of those words translated hell, we promised, as will be recollected, to notice a few instances, wherein the same original words have a different translation. But as the quoting of all such instances, in the scriptures, would lay us under the necessity of writing as many more numbers, perhaps, as we have before completed; we shall only select a few texts, in order that people may see the impropriety of understanding by those original words, a place or state of never-ending torments. To adopt a uniformity of translation, we should read in Job xiv. 13, as follows. “O that thou wouldst hide me in hell,” &c. Now we have just as much reason to say, that Job desired to be committed to a place of eternal misery, as we have to assert, that the rich man, mentioned in Luke, because he was said to “lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments,” was consigned to a place of ceaseless distress: For the same original stands in each text, and cannot, consequently, signify two infinitely different things.

Again. We should also read in Job xvii. 13, “Hell is mine house.” If we are to understand by the original, what is commonly understood by hell, we must suppose, that the pious Job, that perfect and upright man—a man according to God’s own heart, had his habitation in the future regions of endless punishment. But as no sensible, candid man, would presume to draw the conclusion; so such must also acknowledge that, the common understanding of this term is erroneous.

Hosea xiii. 14, “I will ransom them from the power of hell, I will redeem them from death. O, death! I will be thy plagues; O hell! I will be thy destruction.” 1 Cor xv. 55, “O death! where is thy sting, O hell! where is thy victory?” In both of these texts, any one, who will take the trouble to look into a Bible containing marginal references, will find that “hell” stands in the margin. Now it seems to us that, it would be imprudent even in advocates of endless misery to maintain that, hell always signifies a place of ceaseless distress; because, in case they do maintain it, they must see that, the above texts effectually destroy their favourite doctrine. For if God will effect the destruction of hell, or endless misery, supposing them to be synonymous; if hell, or endless misery will not have the victory; then, it is plain that, their rigid adherence to that understanding, must lead them to an unpleasant acknowledgement; viz. that there can be no such thing as an endless hell.

This much, let it suffice to have said concerning HELL, which has been supposed by many a well meaning person, to denote a place of indescribable torment, which should exist when the sun, the moon, and all the hosts of planetary worlds shall have been blotted out of existence; nay, as

long as the SELF-EXISTENT shall occupy his imperishable seat on the throne of Eternity:—that place whose existence has been maintained by feeble mortals, to the horror of every benevolent, christian mind, and to the joy and exultation of Devils. But we should think that all, who have followed us through these numbers, must be satisfied that hell, as used in the scriptures, as we have said before, does not signify a place of endless misery.

We have not written to discredit any correct sentiment. We do not wish to make it appear that there is not a place of unceasing torments, if the scriptures assert that there is. No. If this were the fact, we are sensible that our labors could, by no means, annihilate it, or prevent the exposure of mankind to it. No one, we presume, would charge us with sporting with an all important subject, when sporting would destroy us and others eternally. We do not wish for endless torments, any more than our neighbors. We would do as much as they to escape it, did we believe that such a place did or ever would exist. But we have searched the scriptures to see “if these things be so” and we find it is not so; & this perhaps, will be considered by some, our crime. We have brought forth truth, and this will be our accusation. But we heed them not. We care not for the maledictions of the wilfully blind and the incurably superstitious. With us, it is a small thing to be judged by man’s judgment, especially when it is engendered, as it too often is, on the seat of partiality and prejudice.

We cannot conclude without assuring the friendly and patient readers of these numbers, of our sincere and ardent prayer to the father of all flesh, that he would bless them with the LIGHT of everlasting truth;—fill their hearts with that divine BENEVOLENCE, which shall cause them to abhor every sentiment that savors of cruelty;—and animate them with that LOVE, which shall lead them in the path of duty, to feed in the green pastures, and to slake their thirst with the divine waters of HIS GOODNESS.

ORIGEN.

### FOR THE RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

MESSRS. EDITORS.—In your last No. of the Inquirer, I find some propositions laid down by “J. B.” illustrated by remarks, which he “hopes will tend to harmonize the views of those who may be at a loss concerning the state of the departed spirit before the resurrection of Christ.” He says that “it now appears evident to him that there was no individual existence for men, before Christ’s resurrection, except in the earthly body.” I have never thought it very profitable to enter deeply into abstruse metaphysical subjects, especially, such as are rather speculative than otherwise; yet it is not only proper, but desirable that we possess all the knowledge that comes within the capacity and province of mortals which can in any way add to our felicity. I must however confess that I was somewhat surprised that “J. B.” should assert as a fact, and with a great deal of assurance, that, which I think is doubtful at best, and which I am inclined to think is incorrect.

Speaking of the promise, he says, “The Holy Ghost, then, was the promise, which Abraham and others did not receive, and not receiving it, were not, as Paul says, made perfect. And were Abraham and others made perfect when the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost? Yes.”

If “J. B.” means to convey the idea that Abraham and others did not receive the Spirit until the day of Pentecost, or that it was not given prior to that memorable event, I think he has trodden upon ground not tenable, and advanced an idea which cannot be substantiated by the record given by those who professed to write under the influence of this Spirit. That the Divine Spirit was given in a very peculiar manner at that time, I admit.—That Christ did then emphatically come in his glory and with great power, I confidently believe, and perhaps it may with propriety be considered as the grand epoch, from which we may date

the commencement of that glorious and heavenly dispensation, which was to supercede the dispensation of types and shadows—It was the reign of heaven, when Christ should set up a kingdom of which there should be no end;—when he should sway the sceptre in righteousness, and emancipate the human mind from bondage, darkness and ignorance: but that the Spirit had not previously been given, and that the souls of men were sleeping in the dust until that time, is more than I have yet learnt.

The promise undoubtedly had reference to Christ's coming as narrated in John's Gospel; he tells his apostles that altho' he should leave them, yet he "would not leave them comfortless" he says "a little while and ye shall not see me; and a little while and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father, nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him to you: And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: for this promise they were to tarry at Jerusalem. At the day of Pentecost there was a more general diffusion and manifestation of the divine presence and power: so great was the excitement it produced, that some queried what it could be. Peter addressed them, saying; "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God) I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh &c." But is there not a manifest difference between this copious diffusion or influence of the Spirit and the ordinary bestowment of it? Are we to say that it was not given anterior to this event, and that in consequence of it, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Prophets were made perfect and came in glory? How this could have had any effect on those who had died centuries previous to the christian era, is more than I can conceive.

To prove that this made Abraham and others perfect 'J. B.' quotes Heb. xii. 22, 23. "But ye are come to Mount Zion—and to the Spirits of just men made perfect." Paul further says, "Ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burneth with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest &c. But ye are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." Is not the Apostle here evidently speaking of the two covenants or dispensations, the Law and Gospel. They were not to go to Mount Sinai, or the Law which made nothing perfect—but had come to Mount Zion, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from God. Why, I ask, were not Abraham and others made perfect? Ans. They were under the Law which Paul tells us "made nothing perfect;" yet they obtained a good report and were accounted worthy. But Paul says, a new ministry had commenced, a new covenant had been established by the which we draw nigh unto God. Therefore he says, "refuse ye not him who speaketh, and by whom we have received a kingdom which cannot be moved." At the transfiguration of Jesus, Peter proposed "making three tabernacles, one for Christ, one for Moses and one for Elias; but a voice came out of the cloud which overshadowed them saying, this is my beloved Son, hear ye him: the Law was a shadow of good things to come; but Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands; it was therefore no longer incumbent on his adherents to conform to the requirements of the first covenant, but were brought immediately to Christ, the minister of the true sanctuary. I know not how any thing can be gathered from the foregoing remarks of Paul to shew that the soul possessed no conscious identity of existence until after the resurrection of Christ, or that departed spirits were thus made perfect. Had the spirit dur-

ing this long lapse of time been sleeping in the dust of the earth? And did its future existence depend as it were upon a mere contingency? Had not Christ suffered, died, and risen, heaven would not have been the residence of those immortal spirits which once tabernacled in flesh as 'J. B.' would infer. Do we any where read in the writings of the Apostle, that Christ was raised up merely that he might give man an immortal principle? I think not.—Christ said that if he were lifted up from the earth he would draw all men unto him; undoubtedly by the cords of love, and the power of his glorious gospel:—He says nothing about giving a new existence to spirits. If man in his pristine state possessed a principle which should not perish with the material fabric, but should survive the death of the body; how happened it to be lost in the interim between his creation, and the advent of the Saviour? We read that he brought life and immortality to light (not by his death, but) by the gospel—not that he gave a new existence to spirits, but that he demonstrated and made clear the important truth that man ceased not to exist, when the vital spark had left the tenement of clay, but that he was destined to a glorious immortality: that "when this earthly house should be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"—that "when this mortal, shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption, we shall be raised immortal and incorruptible, triumphing over death, hell and the grave." He came to dispel their doubts, and "to deliver those who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage." He came as a Saviour, not to save from wrath, eternal death, or annihilation; but "to save from sin," and "to bless us by turning away every man from his iniquities" and introducing us into the gospel kingdom of rest, which is righteousness, peace and joy in the divine spirit. He informs us that our future happiness was made sure to us, by an everlasting covenant which could not be annulled: not to give a new constitution or principle. 'J. B.' quotes Thess. iv. 14, and Matt. xxvii. 52. "They that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him: Many bodies of the saints which slept arose after Christ."—How far I ask does the resurrection of bodies of the saints go to prove that there was no individual existence for man, before Christ's resurrection except in the earthly body? Paul says, "many bodies of the saints arose after Christ;" but at that time he says nothing about the resurrection of the soul to immortality. He does not say that at that instant of time, myriads of spiritual beings were ushered into existence. If it be a fact that man originally possessed an immortal soul, I should like to be furnished with the evidence that there has been a lapse of time when the soul did not exist.

A knowledge of the fact that the soul of man is immortal, does not make it either the more or less true. John iii 13, is quoted, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." This probably 'J. B.' thinks furnishes conclusive evidence that Christ was the first who ascended up to heaven, and gave existence to the spirit: Altho' Christ says that no one had ascended up to heaven but himself; yet he was at this time in the flesh, and a resident of this world. If 'J. B.' understands Christ to speak of a pre-existent state, then according to the principle he has laid down, the way must have been previously opened before his incarnation. If, as he says Christ was only in that spirit of God which he calls heaven, and which was imparted on the day of Pentecost, then certainly he was previously there in that sense of the term; for he unquestionably was in this spirit, and possessed it in as great a degree, before this event as he then did. I trust that it is not pretended that Christ was not in the spirit until this event occurred. According to the system of the orthodox: if Christ had not suffered, died, &c. the vast family of man would all have gone down to the shades of darkness to people the regions of woe. 'J. B.'s theory if I understand it, is, that had it not been for this event, the spirit would have



slept unconsciously in the silent tomb throughout an endless eternity—both of these theories I trust will vanish before the light of reason and revelation. The declaration that the body should return to dust, and the spirit unto God who gave, was as true when made, as at the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

HORATIO.

## RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

SATURDAY, April 17, 1824.

*Good and substantial reasons why people ought, in conscience, to pay no attention to the subject of universal salvation.*

1. We ought not, in conscience, to pay any attention to this doctrine, because we know, or think we know, a great deal more, now, than we should be likely to think we did if our knowledge of the subject were increased.

2. We ought not, in conscience, to pay any attention to this doctrine lest we should imbibe different sentiments from those which prevailed with our fathers two hundred years ago.

3. We ought not, in conscience, to pay any regard to this doctrine, lest we should disagree in sentiment with a majority of the people.

4. We ought not, in conscience, to attend to this doctrine, because it is not popular.

5. We ought not to attend to this doctrine, because those who do, are, for that sole reason, regarded with a piously envious and malicious eye.

6. We ought not to attend to it because it is said to appear so reasonable, to those who do, that they are very apt to embrace it.

7. We ought not to attend to the doctrine because we are not old enough, or have too much else to attend to; or, because we are too old and too wilful to attend to it.

8. We ought not (and let it be remembered, *in conscience*, whenever it is not expressed) to attend to this doctrine, because we have every reason to think it would not be agreeable to our minister.

9. We ought not to attend to this doctrine because Christ says, "Call no man your master upon the earth, for one is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

10. We ought not to attend to this doctrine because Christ says again, "He that would save his life shall lose it, and he that would lose his life, for my sake, shall keep it unto life eternal." And again because he says, "Whoso forsaketh not all that he hath, and followeth after me, he cannot be my disciple." And again because he says, "Who-so shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father and the holy angels: but whoso shall confess me before men, him will I also confess, before my Father and the holy angels." And again because he says, "If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you:—if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more shall they call them of his household." Again because he says, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake." And because he says, "I thank

thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." For these and many similar reasons, we cannot, in conscience, look into the doctrine of Universalism.

J. B.

Having had an opportunity cursorily to examine, "Six Sermons, containing some remarks on Mr. Andrew Fuller's Reasons for believing that the future punishment of the wicked will be endless, By Seth Stetson, minister of the gospel." I avail myself of an opportunity to recommend them to the patronage of the public. Mr. Stetson appears to be well informed in the scriptures, and to have given a very just and happy exposition of them in the important instances relating to his subjects. Recent converts to Universalism, and all others who wish to be informed on the great question, What is truth, will find their account in giving Mr. Stetson's pamphlet a faithful perusal.

J. B.

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

*Extract of a Speech, delivered at an aggregate meeting of the Roman Catholics of Cork, by CHARLES PHILLIPS, the celebrated Irish Orator.*

"This hostility of her sects has been the disgrace, the peculiar disgrace of Christianity. The Gentoo loves his cast, so does the Mahometan, so does the Hindoo, whom England, out of the abundance of her charity is about to teach her creed;—I hope she may not teach her practice. But Christianity, Christianity alone exhibits her thousand sects, each denouncing his neighbor here, in the name of God, and damning thereafter out of pure devotion!—"You're a heretic," says the Catholic; "You're a Papist," says the Protestant; "I appeal to Saint Peter," exclaims the Catholic, "I appeal to Saint Athanasius," cries the Protestant; "and if it goes to damning, he's as good as any saint in the calendar." "You'll be damned eternally," moans out the Methodist; "I'm the elect!" Thus it is, you see, each has his anathema, his accusation and his retort, and in the end Religion is the victim! The victory of each is the overthrow of all; and infidelity, laughing at the contest, writes the refutation of their creed in the blood of their combatants! I wonder if this reflection has ever struck any of those reverend dignitaries who rear their mitres against Catholic emancipation. Has it ever glanced across their Christian zeal, if the story of our country should have casually reached the valleys of Hindostan with what an argument they are furnishing the heathen world against their sacred missionary? In what terms could the Christian ecclesiastic answer the Eastern Brahmin, when he replied to his exhortation in language such as this? "Father, we have heard your doctrine: it is splendid in theory, specious in promise, sublime in prospect; like the world to which it leads, it is rich in the miracles of light. But, Father, we have heard that there are times when its rays vanish and leave your sphere in darkness or when your only lustre arises from meteors of fire, and moons of blood: we have heard of the verdant island which the Great Spirit has raised in the bosom of the waters with such a bloom of beauty, that the very wave she has usurped worships the loveliness of her intrusion. The sovereign of our forests is not more generous in his anger than her sons; the snow-flake, ere it falls on the mountain, is not purer than her daughters; little inland seas reflect the splendors of her landscape, and her valleys smile at the story of the serpent! Father, it is true that this isle of the sun, this people of the morning, find the fury of the ocean in your creed, and more than the

venom of the viper in your policy? It is true that for six hundred years, her peasant has not tasted peace, nor her piety rested from persecution? Oh! Brama, defend us from the God of the Christian! Father, father, return to your brethren, retrace the waters; we may live in ignorance, but we live in love, and we will not taste the tree that gives us evil when it gives us wisdom. The heart is our guide, nature is our gospel; in the imitation of our fathers we found our hope, and, if we err, on the virtue of our motives we rely for our redemption." How would the missionaries of the mitre answer him? How will they answer that insulted Being of whose creed their conduct carries the refutation? But to what end do I argue with the BIGOT?—a wretch, whom no philosophy can humanize, no charity soften, no religion reclaim; no miracle convert; a monster, who, red with the fires of hell, and bending under the crimes of earth, erects his murderous divinity upon a throne of skulls, and would gladly feed even with a brother's blood the cannibal appetite of his rejected altar! His very interests cannot soften him into humanity. Surely, if it could, no man would be found mad enough to advocate a system which cankers the very heart of society, and undermines the natural resources of government; which takes away the strongest excitement to industry, by closing up every avenue to laudable ambition; which administers to the vanity or the vice of a party; when it should only study the advantage of a people; and holds out the perquisites of state as an impious bounty on the persecution of religion."

#### INEFFICACY OF FORMAL PRAYER.

In one of the assemblies in America, during her war with Great Britain, wherein there was a majority of Presbyterians, a law was proposed to forbid the praying for the King by the Episcopalians, who however, could not conveniently omit that prayer, it being prescribed in their Liturgy. Dr. Franklin, one of the members, seeing that such a law would occasion more disturbance than it was worth, said that he thought it quite unnecessary, for, added he, "those people have, to my certain knowledge, been praying constantly these twenty years past, that *God would give the King and his council wisdom*, and we all know that not the least notice has ever been taken of that prayer; so that it is plain they have no interest in the court of heaven." The house smiled, and the motion was dropt.—*Franklin's Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 699.*

The NORTHERN ASSOCIATION of UNIVERSALISTS was holden at *Whiting, Vermont*, Oct. 1 and 2, 1823. The Discourses on the occasion, were delivered by Brothers *Dolphus Skinner, S. C. Loveland, Lemuel Wilks, Aaron Kinsman and Robert Bartlett*. Four young brethren were set apart to the work of the gospel ministry, viz. *Asa Priest, C. R. Marsh, D. Skinner and L. Willis*. The Circular Letter was written by *Br. James Babbitt*; and although it does not cheer our hearts by announcing great revivals of the doctrine of grace, in those parts of the herbage, it speaks of a gradual increase of gospel light. The Association stands adjourned, to meet at *Whitchall, N. Y.* on the first Wednesday and Thursday in Oct. 1824.

#### OH TELL ME NOT THAT WINE WILL SOOTHE.

Oh, tell me not that wine will soothe  
A heart beset with woe;  
Oh, tell me not that wine will smoothe  
Grim penury's haggard brow;  
For tho' its wave may beam as bright  
As evening's sparkling tear,  
It cannot gild misfortune's night,  
Or calm the sinner's fear.

Oh, tell me not that beauty's smile—  
That sun of cloudless morn.

Can black despair of wo beguile,  
Or blunt affliction's thorn;  
For though awhile its beams may play  
Where health and pleasure bloom,  
Disease will shroud its pleasing ray—  
It shines not in the tomb.

Oh, tell me not that fame can give  
The cankered conscience peace;  
Oh, tell me not that fame will live  
When hope and life shall cease;  
For tho' it points where honor bleeds,  
And bids the bosom burn,  
It, as the lightning swift, recedes,  
When Time hath grasped his urn.

But tell me that Religion's ray  
Can light the soul to heaven—  
Oh, tell me this can point the way  
To him on quicksands driven,  
And I'll believe; for well I know  
That this alone can save;  
That this can chase the clouds of wo,  
And gild the peasant's grave.

BOSTON BARD.

#### DIED.

In this Town, on the 2d inst. MR. DANIEL BUNCE, aged 77.—Believing in the impartial and unlimited benevolence and mercy of God, the deceased lived an upright and useful life, and died with composure and resignation.

He, thro' his mortal race, in moral glory run,  
And set, a star extinguis'd in the full orb'd sun.

#### TO AGENTS AND SUBSCRIBERS.

We must again remind our Agents and Subscribers of the necessity of their attending to our demands.—They will remember that by the terms of the Paper, payment is to be made **IN ADVANCE.** There is a number in arrears for the first and second volumes, for which a speedy settlement must be made. Those indebted for the third volume only, are requested to comply with the terms, and forward us the amount as soon as possible.

\* \* \* All Letters addressed to this Office, must come post-paid, otherwise no attention will be paid to them.

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THE

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